

# LETTER

*From a Gentleman in Edinburgh, to his Friend in the Countrey; Containing some Animadversions on the Letter from the Master of a private School, to a Reverend Member of the General Assembly.*

SIR,

YOU desire my Thoughts of a Pamphlet, that hath lately crept abroad, under the Title of, *A Letter from the Master of a private School to a Reverend Member of the General Assembly.*

If that calumnious and unmannerly Paper was truly scribed by a School master; The Author, instead of an Answer, deserves to be treated as he doth his Scholars when they break *Priscians* Head, or commit a Solecism in Grammar; That is, with the Discipline of the *Ferula*. It is indeed Pedantick enough, to have proceeded from the stiff-pen of any the meanest Teacher of Boys; But a very short sighted person may perceive, that the private Printers do cover themselves under the Name of a private School-master. For tho Mrs *Anderson* be charged here with the erroneous Printing of School-books, such as Grammar and Classick Authors; there is no particular Condescendence of Erratas in any of these, but only of some in her Newtestament. But in order to your clearer Satisfaction in this matter, before I begin to anatomize, and consider this Paper, it will be fit to let you know the true state of that Plea betwixt Mrs. *Anderson* and some Underling, Unfree Printers in *Edinburgh*.

The deceast *Andrew Anderson* having erected the first Printing-house of any value in *Scotland*; that he might be the more enabled to bring the Art of Printing here, where it had but slender Incouragement, to some perfection; obtained a Gift from King *Charles the 2d.* to be his Majesties Printer, and to enjoy the sole priviledge of Printing Acts of Parliament and Council, &c. Bibles, Newtestaments, Theology, Law and School-books: For which Gift he payed four hundred and fifty Pound *Sterling* to the Thesaury. It had this good Effect, that our Prints became of more request, and the Printing-house kept up to this day by his Relict, makes a Figure little inferior to any in *Europe*: Nay, farther, Books of her Impression are better, and to be had at more easie Rates; and Gentlemen are served at her Office with Printing & Paper, Cheaper and Finer than any where else: As may be sufficiently attested by many persons of Honour & Credit within this City of *Edinburgh*, and in other places, who are her Customers. Mrs. *Andersons* Impression of *Pool's* Notes so well known through this Kingdom, and for Correctness excelling the *English* Editions, doth speak for itself. Which great Work she did expedite upon her own Charges annually, without any advanced Subscription-Money: Whereas the *English* Impression was carried on by severals in Co-partnery, and not without the Additional Incouragement of many Subscribers, beside a thousand Pound *sterling* out of the Thesaury.

*James Watson*, and some other Printers would be envying Mrs. *Andersons* thriving, have several times offered at Incroachments upon her Priviledges, by all the Methods of Baseness and Calumny: And particularly of late, by falling to Print a Newtestament in a small Size. But the matter being brought before the Privy Council, and they finding her to be so well founded in the Point of Right, and the Justice of her Cause, that all their sinister Suggestions were little regarded: They have now presumed to personate a *Domine*, and to impose upon the venerable Assembly, by repeating their formerly baffled Pretences under a Vizard. Mrs. *Anderson* once informed me that she was something inclined to give up her Printing-office in a little time, when her Priviledge expires, rather than trouble her self any longer to contend with such a Beggarly Crew; which would oblige



oblige her Servants to seek for Work in other parts: since no pretender to Printing in *Edinburgh*, except *George Mosman*, can afford to publish any Book consisting but of thirty sheets of Paper upon their own Charges.

This being premised, I proceed to take the Pamphleteers to Task, by making the following Animadversions upon their Libel of a Letter.

1. It is directed to one who, the Autho<sup>r</sup>s say, *has a great interest among the leading Members of the General Assemblie*. This is an Expression so rash and indiscreet, as deserves the Assemblies Censure: For it argues, that there is Practising and Factions in that supreme and venerable Ecclesiastick Judicatory, and that the Presbyterian Parity is evacuated by leading Members.

2. The first Leaf which is a piece of loose undigested Jargon, resolves in this, That the perverse Education of Youth, is partly owing to Mrs. *Andersons* erroneous Editions of School-books, But for Reasons known to themselves, they thought not fit to give a Specimen of any Escapes in these, alledging (a) that would require a Volume, and fell not so naturally under the Assemblies Cognizance, a fair Excuse forsooth! Not to make a special Condescendance, after such a general Accusation; And why should the Assembly be troubled with the one, and not with the other? The true Reason was, because they could not be particular, and were advancing an Untruth; but this is of a piece with these mens former Method of Proceeding, and the Effect of pure Malice: For *in generalibus latet dolus*.

3. They bring in an impertinent Discourse about the Liberty of the Press, which hath no Contingency with Mrs. *Andersons* Priviledge: For the business of Licensing respects only Books that were never before Printed; whereas the most that she pretends to, is the sole Re-printing of some material Books which were not thought fit to be left to every Bungler that sets up for a Printer to try his hand upon.

Page 4. It is pretended (b) that when the priviledge of Printing is confined to any person or Society, the Nation must expect to be imposed upon as to the Price and Quality of the Work: Whereas the allowing Printers the same Liberty to Print all things, would produce a certain Emulation among them to excell one another in the goodness of their Work, and the reasonableness of their Prices. This Position I take the same Liberty to deny, as they do to advance it; for to my certain knowledge Mrs. *Anderson* doth print and sell at easier Rates than any other Printer here. Its true, if all persons were alike priviledged in the matter of Printing, there might possibly arise some Emulation who should sell cheapest; but who should make the best Work, would be the least of their care: And so the Nation would be either grossly imposed upon, or we should find fewer Forreign Books printed at Home than now.

5. They dress up a List of pretended Errors in Mrs. *Andersons* New-Testament, excerpted out of the Printers Information. This I confess to be true, there is such a List in their Information, but was never excerpted out of Mrs. *Andersons* New-Testament: For there are none so gross to be found there; Nay, I dare undertake for her, that of three sorts of New Testaments which are in her Office, and there are no more, (and there never was so many kinds in any Printing Office) there is not one but she will be content to submit to the Test of the severest Censor. But if it were true, as they falsely suggest, that there are so many Escapes in the Books printed by Mrs. *Anderson*, who is better furnished with printing Instruments and choice of Paper than half a Dozen Printers in *Scotland*, put them all together, has the best Workmen, and gives large Fees to sufficient Correctors: Ifay, if notwithstanding all these Considerations her Prints be faulty; is it to be supposed, that the evil will be cured by indulging a boundless Liberty of Printing to every pitiful Fellow that has the Impudence to set up a Press, without either a Sufficiencie of Printing-Tools, or Paper, or Workmen? Witness President *Spotswoods* Practiques, the printing whereof was undertaken by *James Watson* in the year 1703, and promised to be finished betwixt and the first of July 1704, as the Proposals and the Receipts of the Subscription-money doth testify. But Mr. *John Spotswood* the Publisher was forced to send to *London* himself for Types, and to buy the Paper: And when all was done there is hardly yet ten Sheets of one hundred and twenty cast off; which proceeds only from the want of Hands or Workmen.

This I hope will suffice to set this matter in a true Light, and to disabuse the World by letting every body see how little ground there is for the Noise that is dayly made by the petty Printers. I am

Sir, your very humble Servant.

